

# THE ZOOLOGIST.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL

OF

NATURAL HISTORY.

---

THIRD SERIES—VOL. XVI.

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EDITED BY

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MEMBER OF THE BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.

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DELECTANDO PARITERQUE MONENDO.

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LONDON:

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO., LIMITED.

1892.

LONDON:  
WEST, NEWMAN AND CO., PRINTERS,  
54, HATTON GARDEN, E.C.



## PREFACE.

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WITH the issue of the December number the sixteenth volume of the present series of 'The Zoologist' is brought to a close.

The year 1892 has not been a remarkably eventful one for naturalists, although it may be predicted that in the annals of history it will be noted, according to precedent, as the year in which an extraordinary plague of Field Mice (*Arvicola agrestis*) overran the hill pastures of the south of Scotland. Some account of this was given in 'The Zoologist' for May last, supplemented in September by the Reports of Professor Loeffler, of Greifswald, on the experiments made by him with a view to combat a similar plague which has prevailed during the present year in Thessaly. In destroying these little pests, by digging out the nests and devouring the young, the great utility of the Rook has been well shown by our correspondent Mr. H. M. Bernard (p. 355), and was amply demonstrated in the evidence taken in Scotland by the Committee of the Board of Agriculture, whose Report on this subject is on the eve of publication.

Amongst birds which have attracted more than usual attention during the current year, two species may be especially mentioned, the Quail and the Ruddy Sheldrake. The former has been reported to have been met with by sportsmen in unusual numbers in September, and the discovery of more than an average number of nests with eggs has been also announced; the latter, hitherto regarded as a purely introduced species, has made its appearance in small flocks in so many different parts of the United Kingdom as to suggest the possibility of their being genuine immigrants, and not escaped birds. The evidence on the subject has been summarised and dealt with by Mr. F. M. Ogilvie (pp. 392—398).

In reviewing the *status* of the Cirl Bunting (pp. 121, 174) and the Woodchat (p. 345) as British birds, Mr. O. V. Aplin has done good service, and it may be clearly seen from his statistics what is now the actual distribution of each.

Amongst the rarer birds met with during the year the following have been reported:—Spotted Eagle, Serin, Barred Warbler, Yellow-browed Warbler, Woodchat, Pectoral Sandpiper, Macqueen's Bustard, and Iceland and Sabine's Gulls. In Ireland the occurrence has been

noted of the Pink-footed Goose, Roller, Bee-eater, and Spotted Redshank.

The observations of the Rev. W. Warde Fowler (pp. 303—309) tend to prove that the Marsh Warbler (*Acrocephalus palustris*), hitherto regarded as a rare summer visitor to England, is in all probability an annual migrant, and either generally overlooked or confounded with its congener the Reed Warbler.

Dr. Klein's researches into the nature of the so-called grouse-disease have thrown a new light upon this obscure and much-debated epidemic, and his book on the subject, of which a notice has been given (pp. 337—341), should be read by every naturalist who is also a sportsman.

More attention than usual has been paid to the rarer British Bats, and to the smaller Mammalia generally, during the past twelve months, in consequence of which the geographical range of certain species has been extended, and useful additions made to our knowledge of their habits.

Reptiles and Batrachians, to the majority of observers, are never so attractive as other forms of life; we are all the more grateful, therefore, for such contributions as those of Mr. Norman Douglass and Mr. G. A. Boulenger.

Amongst Fishes, several marine species have been reported which are not commonly met with on our coasts, such as the Bonito, the Greenland Shark, the Æquoreal Pipe-fish, and the curious little *Leptocephalus morrisii*, two specimens of which were found by our observant correspondent Mr. Robert Warren, on the coast of Mayo.

Amongst Crustacea, also, the same observer has met with some uncommon forms on the coast of Sligo. Mr. Chichester Hart's 'Notes on the Marine Mollusca of Donegal,' extending through four numbers of this Journal, supply some useful additions to our knowledge of the distribution of species in Ireland.

Nor has Entomology been altogether neglected, notwithstanding the existence of Journals which are devoted to its consideration. The unusual abundance in 1892 of *Cynthia cardui* and *Tortrix viridana*, of the Mangel-wurzel Fly and the Mustard Beetle, has been duly noted and commented on.

The Editor, therefore, finds good cause to thank his contributors for the number and variety of their communications during the past year, and to express the hope that he may be similarly favoured during the year to come.

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